

NEA(14)4

Draft Report of the Thirty-First Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Commission

Le Nouveau Monde Hotel, Saint-Malo, France

3 - 6 June, 2014

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Raoul Bierach (Norway), opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the Thirty-First Annual Meeting of the Commission.
- 1.2 Because of the change to the meeting structure in 2014 to allow for a one-day Theme-based Special Session to be held, the Council had agreed that there would be no oral statements at the Opening Sessions of the Council and Commission meetings. A joint opening statement on behalf of the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) attending the Annual Meeting of the Commission was distributed (Annex 1).

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its agenda, NEA(14)XX (Annex 2).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 Mr Marc Owen (European Union) was appointed as Rapporteur for the meeting.

4. Election of Officers

- 4.1 Dr Ciaran Byrne (European Union) was elected Chairman of the Commission and Dr Konstantin Drevetnyak (Russian Federation) was elected as its Vice-Chairman. The Commission thanked the Chairman for his excellent work over the last four years.

5. Review of the 2013 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area

- 5.1 The representative of ICES, Mr Ian Russell, presented the scientific advice on salmon stocks relevant to the North-East Atlantic Commission, CNL(14)8. The Advisory Committee (ACOM) report from ICES, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page XX of this document.
- 5.2 The Chairman thanked the representative of ICES for the presentation and asked whether Parties wished to ask any questions related to the presentation.
- 5.3 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands) noted that there has been no salmon fishery at the Faroe Islands for a number of years, but stocks are still not in a healthy

condition. Acknowledging that it is a complex issue he asked whether the representative of ICES could advise what the main reasons for this may be. The representative of ICES responded that marine survival had been low since the 1990s and that there had been changes at sea, such as broad changes in ecosystems in the North Atlantic that could have affected, for example, the availability of food.

- 5.4 The representative of the NGOs noted that the fact that the Southern NEAC stock as a whole is above its Conservation Limit masks big differences in stock status among jurisdictions, and asked whether the ICES representative could comment on the make-up of the stock. The representative of ICES acknowledged that the overall status of the Southern NEAC stock masks differences among rivers but indicated that the ICES website and WGNAS report should be referred to as they provide more information on individual stocks. The representative of the NGOs acknowledged this but noted that it can give a skewed view and asked whether this issue could be considered for future presentations at NASCO/NEAC meetings? The representative of ICES stated that this would be borne in mind.
- 5.5 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) asked whether scientific fisheries should be prosecuted with the aim of improving available data, given that ICES is working with old data. He also noted that genetic analysis of historical scale samples had indicated that North American salmon were present in the Faroese fishery area. The representative of ICES acknowledged that new data would be useful.
- 5.6 The Chairman indicated that consideration of the issue of by-catch is part of the Council's action plan, and that it would be wise to avoid duplication. The Council might decide if further action was needed, possibly including the need for an additional request to ICES. The representative of ICES stated that the ICES WGNAS already has a fairly challenging work schedule for 2015 particularly given this will be a full catch advice year.
- 5.7 The representative of the EU noted the need for new research/data, given the changed circumstances and the age of the data being used. She stated that the EU supports ongoing discussions to this end. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that he wanted to continue such discussions with other Parties. The Chairman asked whether, following ICES recommendations further consideration of this matter should be referred to the Council; this was agreed by the Commission.

6. Progress with development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese Fishery

- 6.1 At the Commission's Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting in 2009, the Chairman had noted that ICES had been unable to make progress in developing quantitative catch advice because the Commission had not agreed on appropriate management units or explicit management objectives for those units, and that there was no pre-agreed sharing agreement among NASCO Parties. Since 2010, the Commission had discussed the possible development of a Risk Framework for the Faroese fishery that would be needed before ICES could provide quantitative catch advice. The Commission had

provided feedback to ICES on an appropriate sharing mechanism based on the catch share in the period 1984 – 1988 but not on the other elements. In the absence of such feedback from the Commission, ICES had developed a risk-based framework for providing catch advice for fish exploited in this fishery (mainly non-maturing 1SW fish from NEAC countries). Catch advice had been provided in 2013 at both the stock complex and country level and catch options tables provide both individual probabilities and the probability of simultaneous attainment of proposed management objectives for both. ICES had recommended that management decisions should be based principally on a 95% probability of attainment of CLs in each stock complex / country individually. The simultaneous attainment probability may also be used as a guide, but ICES had highlighted the need for managers to be aware that this will generally be quite low when large numbers of management units are used.

- 6.2 At the Thirtieth Annual Meeting, the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had advised the Commission that it was not able to move forward on agreeing a risk framework but agreed to consider this issue further at the Thirty-First Annual Meeting.
- 6.3 The Commission agreed that it would be important to make further progress on this issue prior to negotiations in 2015 for a new regulatory measure/decision for the Faroese fishery to apply from 2016. The Chair asked whether it would be possible to bring this to a conclusion during the Thirty-First Annual Meeting of the Commission. The representative of ICES made a short presentation updating members of the Commission on progress with this issue to date.
- 6.4 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) indicated that his delegation would be willing to follow ICES advice provided in 2015, and that a new regulation could be put in place that utilised the Framework of Indicators. There would be consultations on this matter in the Faroe Islands.
- 6.5 The Chair noted that the presence of North American stocks wasn't included in the previous advice/recommendations provided by ICES on the risk framework. The Commission agreed a new question to ICES to address this issue.

7. Regulatory Measures

- 7.1 At the Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting a multi-annual Decision regarding the salmon fishery in Faroese waters in 2013, 2014 and 2015 (NEA(12)7) was agreed, together with a Framework of Indicators (FWI). The Commission had agreed that the same procedure as that used in the West Greenland Commission would be used to apply the FWI in the North-East Atlantic Commission and this had been done in 2013. The Commission agreed that the same approach should be used again in 2014.
- 7.2 A report describing the work of the FWI Working Group was tabled (NEA(14)3) and introduced by the Group's Coordinator, Mr Ian Russell. The Group had advised that the results of the assessment in 2014 are consistent with the previous PFA forecast for three of the four stock complexes while for the fourth stock complex (Northern NEAC MSW salmon) the FWI suggested that the forecast of PFA was an over-estimate. The Group had, therefore, concluded that 'no reassessment of the existing management advice for the Faroes fishery is required from ICES in 2014'. In accordance with the

request for scientific advice adopted by the Council last year, ICES had been advised that it would not need to provide catch options or alternative management advice for the NEAC area in 2014. The Commission noted that the Decision adopted in 2012 will continue to apply to the 2015 fishery.

7.3 The representative of the Russian Federation provided an update on discussions with Norway on matters of common interest in salmon management, which were discussed at a meeting between the two Parties in April 2014, and at which plans for new regulatory measures for the whole of Norway from 2016 were presented, together with information on the process for phasing out bend-net fishing in Finnmark by 2018. Russia was supportive of Norway's plans for new regulations to be implemented from 2016, and welcomed plans to ban bend-nets, but due to the high proportion of salmon originating from Russian rivers taken in the sea fishery in the Varangerfjord, Russia insisted that new measures aimed at reducing the catch of Russian salmon in that region be implemented in 2015. It was agreed that, as before, Russia will be consulted on proposals for new regulations for 2016 and informed of progress in phasing out bend-nets in Finnmark. Norway and Russia agreed that regulation in Finnmark should be handled cooperatively, and that future cooperation would be facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) covering cooperation on research, monitoring, scientific advice and management. Russia and Norway will aim to sign such a MoU in autumn 2014. The representative of Norway confirmed that its Environmental Agency will investigate how catches of salmon originating in Russian rivers could be reduced in the Varangerfjord from 2015, and that Russia would be carefully consulted. He emphasized that the Varangerfjord fishery is historical and of significant importance for Sami culture and economic life and that making possible future restrictions would be a demanding task.

7.4 The representative of the Russian Federation made a statement on its position with regard to these issues. Russia appreciates that this is a difficult issue requiring the right balance between salmon conservation and indigenous peoples' interests. However, Russia is concerned about the large proportion of salmon from Russian rivers taken as catch in Norwegian waters, particularly given the overall decline in salmon abundance in the North Atlantic and its uncertain future prospects, and Russia's salmon conservation efforts at home where there is no sea fishery in the Barents Sea and catch-and-release fishing is predominantly exercised in recreational fisheries (including on the rivers from which salmon are intercepted in Norwegian waters). Russia strictly regulates all salmon fisheries, including by TAC and quotas, with a goal to maintain Russian salmon stocks in as healthy condition as possible given the contemporary challenges. She indicated that Russia also wants the resource to provide maximum possible benefit in Russia i.e. employment and income to local people, who sometimes do not have any other means to earn a living. Conservation of stocks and Norway's interception of salmon returning to Russian rivers has been the main reason for Russia's dialogue with Norway over the last years, with Russia's objective being for further steps to be taken and measures to be adopted to further reduce sea catches of salmon, first and foremost in areas where large catches of Russian salmon take place, such as the Varangerfjord, as has again been confirmed by recent findings from the Kolarctic-salmon project. Russia's intention is to continue the dialogue with Norway on this issue; Russia wishes to move this matter forward together to find a solution acceptable to both Parties.

8. Risk of Transmission of *Gyrodactylus salaris* in the Commission Area

- 8.1 While the Working Group on *G.salaris* in the North-East Atlantic Commission area had not met since 2008, the Commission had agreed to retain an agenda item on this issue so as to monitor developments in relation to the parasite.
- 8.2 The Chair asked whether Parties had any updates to provide on their work to manage *G.salaris*. The representative of Norway reported that efforts to eradicate *G.salaris* will be continued in Norway as planned. The five infected rivers in the Rauma region (where NASCO's annual meeting was held in 2009) will be treated with rotenone for the second time this year. Norway will also do the necessary planning and mapping of two infected rivers in the Skibotn region with the aim of treatment of the rivers, which were last treated five years ago, to eradicate the parasite by the end of this year. If this is successful, Norway will have reduced the number of infected rivers from 49 to seven by 2016.
- 8.3 The EU gave a short update on the situation in Sweden, where a regulation was introduced in two steps (in 1999 and 2003) to prevent infestation in rivers. The last infection was in 2005. There are a number of Swedish rivers – all those emptying in Skaggerark north of Gota alv – which are now declared free of the parasite. How the infections of *G.salaris* proceed in infected rivers and the impact on salmon stocks are followed up by a monitoring programme. There are indications that *G.salaris* does not have such a large impact on Swedish salmon stocks as it does on those in Norway, and that impact is declining over time, after the first documented infection. There is no plan to treat infected rivers with rotenone given the secondary effects of rotenone on the whole ecosystem.
- 8.4 The representative of the EU indicated that rotenone is not approved in the EU as a biocide as proper risk assessment has not been undertaken, but that it may be used by EU Member States as an emergency measure when other measures have been exhausted. The representative of the EU also noted that there is a current regulatory proposal for the EU on invasive alien species. This is being discussed by the European Parliament and the European Council. *G.salaris* was one species covered by the Impact Assessment carried out in preparing this proposal. The proposed regulation will require EU Member States to have plans in place to intervene and to prevent introduction of *G.salaris* where possible.

9. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 9.1 The Chairman announced that the draw for the North-East Atlantic Commission prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was made by the Auditor on 6 May. The winning tag had been applied to a MSW female salmon at Chester Weir on the River Dee in England. It was recaptured one week later at Corwen on the River Dee and subsequently released. The winner of the Commission's \$1,500 prize was Mr Fred Miers, of Denbighshire, Wales. The Commission offered its congratulations to the winner.

10. Recommendations to the Council on the Request to ICES for Scientific Advice

- 10.1 The Chair noted that the Commission needed to appoint a second representative to the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC); a manager and a scientist from each Commission are SSC members, and a manager from NEAC needed to be appointed. The Commission appointed Ms. Elena Samylova (Russian Federation).
- 10.2 The Commission decided to refer the request for scientific advice from ICES to the Council. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(14)10 (Annex 3).

11. Other Business

- 11.1 There was no other business.

12. Date and Place of the Next Meeting

- 12.1 The Commission agreed to hold its next meeting during the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council.

13. Report of the Meeting

- 13.1 The Commission agreed a report of its meeting.

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page **XX**, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of North-East Atlantic Commission papers is included in Annex 4.